

Kilton-Wilkinson House
201 South Main Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-230

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
130-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

KILTON-WILKINSON HOUSE

Address: 201 South Main Street, Providence, Providence
County, Rhode Island

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
130-

Present Owner: International Supply Company, 215 Niantic Avenue,
Providence.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is an early example of a large frame house

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1717 William Hopkins, yeoman, sells for 50 £ in current money of New England to Nicholas Power, merchant, a 40' Lott of land situated and being in Providence on the W side of the Towne Street by the Salt Water. Bounded: E by Towne Street 40'; S by 40' Lott of Stephen Dexter; W by Channel of Providence Harbor 40'; N by large gangway. - Deed Book 2, page 634, in Providence City Hall.

1746 Anne Power, widow of Nicholas Power, distiller, sells for 500 £ current lawful money of New England to Arnold and Dinah Comstock, a 40' Lott of land on the W side of the Towne Street with the privilege of wharfing, bounded: E by Towne Street 40'; S by Stephen Dexter; W by Chanel 40'; N by large gangway. - Deed Book 12, page 54, in Providence City Hall.

1746 Josiah Arnold sells for 300 £ in Bills of Publick credit of the Old Tenor to David Wilkinson a full MOIETY of a certain lott of land, with warfing privileges the whole bounded: E by Towne Street 40'; S by Stephen Dexter; W by Channel 40'; N by large gangway. - Deed Book 12, page 195, in Providence City Hall.

1750 Joseph Kilton, cordwainer, and Dinah Kilton (widow of William Comstock) sell for \$2400 £ old Tenor to Geroge Corlis, mariner, the N half or MOIETY of a certain 40' Lott on the W side of the Towne Street in said Providence which said Dinah in her widowhood and in partnership with Josiah Arnold purchased of Anne Power in 1746, with wharfing and all other privileges with the N 1/2 up and down of the Dwelling House on the said 40' Lott now erected and built, and as it now stands in and under occupancy and improvements of said Joseph and Dinah Kilton. - Deed Book 12, page 372, in Providence City Hall.

1761 David Wilkinson sells for 500 £ old-Tenor to Gideon Young, yeoman, the S or S/ly 1/2 part of a certain lot of land adjoining the W side of Towne Street, the whole lot bounded E by Town Street 40'; S formerly by Stephen Dexter; W by the Chanel 40'; N by large gangway, together with the S/ly 1/2 part of a large Dwelling House standing on said lot, the other 1/2 part belonging to George Corlis. - Deed Book 17, page 156, in Providence City Hall.

1763 Gideon Young, barber, sells for 8000 £ to George Corlis, merchant, the S/ly 1/2 part of a certain lot of land together with the S or S/ly part of a large Dwelling House standing on said lot, the other 1/2 part already belonging to said Corlis. Deed Book 18, page 10, in Providence City Hall.

1790 WILL...George Corlis: "I bequeath to my son John Corlis the Dwelling House where I now live, the lot of land on which it stands, together with the wharf, store and all other buildings on said lot standing and being...also". . . - Wills Book 11, page 303, in Providence City Hall.

1815 John Corliss sells to Isaac Bowen a certain lot of land in the S/ly part of Providence together with the buildings standing thereon (excepting a store built on said lot by Isaac Bowen jr et al) Bounded: E by South Main Street 40'; S by heirs of Welcome Arnold; W by the River N by wide gangway. - Deed Book 38, page 94, in Providence City Hall.

1823 Silvanus G Martin, administrator, quit claims for \$3000 to Eliza Bowen wife of Isaac jr a certain lot of land with buildings and appertenances being part of the Estate belonging to John Corlis. - Deed Book 45, page 374, in Providence City Hall.

1824 Eliza Bowen, widow of Isaac, lived here. - Providence Directory.

1830 POLICY RECORD:...Eliza Bowen..w side...37' front and 30' front to rear. 2 stories high in front and 3 in rear with a gambrel roof...self-occupied (#103 South Main Street). - Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I., Vol. 7, polity #4158.

1854 Eliza Bowen, widow of Isaac, sells for \$8000 to (son-in-law) Samuel B Bullock a certain lot of land bounded: E by South Main Street 40'; S by heirs of Welcome Arnold 93'; W by Bradford and Hall 40'; N by Planet Street formerley called Corlis Street, being the same as Deed Book 45, page 374. - Deed Book 138, page 449, in Providence City Hall.

1855 Property taxed to Samuel B Bullock and to the following persons in the year designated:

1884 Providence Institution for Savings
1889 Mary E Hickey wife of Timothy E
1903 Caroline E Dean
1911 Rumford Chemical Works
1929 Smith-Gibbs Company

2. Date of erection: According to the deeds, the house was apparently built between 1746 and 1750 by two separate parties; the north half by Dinah Kilton and the south half by David Wilkinson. George Corlis who acquired the north half in 1750 and the south half in 1763 was the first person to own the entire house. The house has usually been associated with the name of his son, John Corlis.

3. Notes on alterations and additions: At some time, probably in the later nineteenth century, the house was raised one story to provide shops at the ground floor. The interiors of the house have been extensively altered for later commercial and storage uses.

4. Sources of information: Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island, (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), p. 240; called the Corliss House.

John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), P. 71; called the John Corlis House.

B. Supplemental Material: The following quotation, about the great fire on South Maine Street in 1801, is from the Providence Gazette, January 24, 1801--

"Fire began in the loft of the large brick store belonging to Mr John Corliss, on his upper wharf...the Store of Mr. Corlis was destroyed. In all, there were 37 buildings destroyed...including 16 Dwelling Houses, 10 Stores, and 11 outhouses. The Dwelling House of Mr Corlis was several times on fire but was saved by perservering exertion."

The following statement was prepared by the Smith-Gibbs Company, at one time owners and occupants of the George Corlis House--

"As early as 1860 the H. B. Smith Co. of Westfield, Mass. began the manufacture and erection of Gold's Patent Cast Iron Sectional Steam Boiler, for heating purposes. Their business soon grew to such an extent that in 1870 a local branch was established under the direction of Mr. H.J.Watson. In 1875 Mr. James M. Smith, son of Henry B. Smith, one of the founders of the business, superseded Mr. Watson in the management of the Providence Branch. He was later joined by E. W. Gibbs also from Westfield in the year 1890. Under their leadership the business grew and prospered until in 1914 a corporation known as the Smith-Gibbs Co. was formed buying all rights and stock of the local and continued the business along the same lines. Mr. Smith

died in 1925 being practically at the head of the business for fifty years. For the past twenty five years the office at #11 South Main Street and warehouse and shop #7 and #9 Leonard Street at the foot of College Street was well known to their friends....

"We make no use of the mansion property except for a small amount of storage space. Our Offices Pipe shop are located on the first floor and basement. It is interesting to note that this building antedates the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the first Baptist Meeting House and the Old Market Building."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large, two-and-a-half story frame building with a gambrel roof, an early example of the central-hall type plan using four chimneys in the outside walls.

2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: About 40' x 36', house raised one story above ground on later brick business building, two-and-a-half stories above the first floor brick building.

2. Foundations: Brick.

3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame, plank walls, clapboards.

4. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys in outside walls. Only one still continues above the roof line.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Only entrance to home now from rear adjoining warehouse. Later Greek Revival paneled wood door in simple frame with horizontal top light. Unused entrance on south side, simple wood frame with top light, later door. Location of original entrance not apparent.

b. Windows and shutters: Nine over nine light double-hung windows, molded sills and heads. Second-floor heads continuous with bed mold of cornice. No shutters, but shutter hardware in place.

6. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Gambrel roof, overhangs about 1' at both ends. Asphalt shingles.

b. Dormers: Gabled dormers with eight over eight light double hung-windows.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan with six main rooms on each floor of upper parts. May have been a four-room plan originally. First floor and basement entirely remodeled many times as offices and warehouses. Central hall at second floor now accessible only by rear door from adjoining warehouse. Original access to second floor not apparent.

2. Stairways: Two stairways in central hall, one behind the other, straight run, appear to be in original locations, but are not original stairs. A few parts surviving on the front stair would seem to date from about 1810-20.

3. Flooring: Wood - mostly later flooring. Some early, wide boards.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster

5. Doors: Miscellaneous paneled wood doors including some raised panel doors with either two, four or six panels that appear to be original.

6. Trim: Simple molded wood trim. Mitered architraves on doors and windows, many apparently later. Exposed corner posts cased and with beaded edges. Baseboards and some ceiling cornices from several periods - some with large simple profiles appear to be original.

7. Hardware: Mostly inexpensive, later hardware. A few original wrought iron latches and strap hinges on inside doors.

8. Lighting: Electric

9. Heating: All original fireplaces closed up and mantels removed. Parts of various later central heating systems survive.

D. Site

House at southwest corner of South Main and Planet Streets, on sidewalk line on both north and east sides, adjoining warehouse on west, narrow passageway on south.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
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